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United for Quality Care

March 1, 2023
Angel Bailey, PCA, Ansonia
District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Angel Bailey and I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) living in Ansonia. I'm here to ask you to fully fund home care services, so that PCAs like me can finally earn a living wage and receive quality benefits.

I have worked as a PCA for six years and I love the work I do. Right now, I care for a young child who has a feeding tube. The work I do as a PCA, allows my consumers to enjoy the same comforts at home as you and me. I am a lifeline for my consumers, but as a PCA I also need this work to be a lifeline for me.

The low wages and lack of adequate benefits is unacceptable. We asked for \$20 an hour two years ago and were finally given \$18.25 per hour after much negotiation, but what we have gained in pay increase we have also lost due to inflation. So we are back where we began. I have to keep an incredibly tight budget. The wages we earn are barely enough to make ends meet, much less save for the future.

Despite struggling financially, I also have to limit my hours to 25 per week so that I won't lose my Husky health insurance. We were promised a healthcare stipend, but a year later the state still has not delivered on that promise. PCAs and consumers were not notified that they had to apply for the stipend until three days prior to the deadline. It is wrong that we are forced to cap our income just to keep our health insurance, but with my asthma and other chronic conditions, I cannot afford to be uninsured.

We were also promised sick leave, but a year later we still don't have access to any sick leave. In January, I got COVID for a second time. Without paid time off, I suited up in PPE and went back to work only a few days later. Today, I still struggle with vertigo and other symptoms that my doctor thinks are the result of me going back to work too early. Are these the kind of problems that we as essential workers should be facing?

In addition to poverty wages, no health insurance, and no paid sick leave, we also do not have a pension or retirement plan offered through our job. How are we supposed to save for our future or do PCAs not deserve to retire? I do not want to work until I die, but without better wages and benefits, I worry that I will be forced to leave this field I love.

Please do what is right by PCAs and our consumers. We are fighting for a minimum wage of \$25/hour, and health insurance and retirement for all.

Thank you for your time.